

**Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control
Public Hearing, July 9, 2007–“Economics and Organization of Bibliographic Data”**

The Library of Congress Perspective

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For some time now, the Library of Congress has been exploring means to be able to use bibliographic data from external sources. These have included a number of initiatives and collaboratives to enable us to take advantage of cataloging data produced by others. You heard this morning from Michael Charbonneau about the largest, most successful, longest lasting, and most encompassing—the Program for Cooperative Cataloging. During the tenure of my predecessor as director for cataloging, Sarah Thomas, LC for the first time, in a concerted manner, implemented copy cataloging as a substantial part of its cataloging operations. This was in the early 1990s. In fact, PCC as we know it today and copy cataloging at LC have developed along a parallel trajectory. Even though the availability of more nationally accepted bibliographic data under the banner of PCC has grown and LC has processed more of its receipts using copy created by other institutions (71,000 records in fiscal year 2006 were based on copy), we are still not able to assert that we are current with all incoming material.

A pivotal paper presented by my boss, Deanna Marcum, at the January 2005 Midwinter Meeting of the American Library Association reverberated throughout the bibliographic control community. She had been our Associate Librarian for Library Services for a little over a year at the time. Her topic was “The Future of Cataloging.” In her opening paragraph, she stated, and I quote: “The Library of Congress is investing in cataloging at the rate of forty-four million dollars a year! You can well appreciate that a cost of that magnitude really got my attention.” End of quote. Managers

in LC's cataloging operations have long worried about the cost of the bibliographic data we produce and have sought ways to reduce that cost. Since Dr. Marcum's arrival as the Associate Librarian, we have been encouraged, indeed challenged, to intensify our search for ways to gain cataloging efficiencies.

It is fair to say that we have made strides, even as we acknowledge that we must do more if we are 1) to keep abreast of the influx of print and other analog materials, whose volume shows no signs of lessening; 2) to be able to provide bibliographic access to the explosion of digital and web resources; and 3) ultimately to assist in reducing the remaining high number of LC's special format materials still not under adequate bibliographic control. It may be informative to share some obligatory statistics. In fiscal year 1991, our cataloging staff (catalogers, cataloging technicians, supervisors and managers) numbered just shy of 750. The corresponding output from that staff that year was slightly less than 240,000 volumes cataloged. By comparison, fifteen years later in fiscal year 2006, our staffing level in cataloging was just above 400. While the staff had dwindled by some 350, the output had risen to almost 350,000 volumes cataloged, increasing by over 100,000. I view these as impressive numbers, but still we must do more. And, in our current Congressional budget climate, we must do it without the expectation of increased funding for staff. It must be done by using the staff we have more wisely and efficiently and by using existing metadata where we can obtain it, with minimal revision. Sound familiar?

The dust appears to be settling from one of the steps we took to achieve a degree of efficiency—one that I viewed as being less than catastrophic for the national bibliographic control apparatus—namely, to cease providing controlled series access. It is an understatement to say that the fallout was great! I will spare you a recapitulation of the aftermath of that decision and the

justifications that LC had to make in response. Suffice it to say that the establishment of this Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control is a chief outcome.

Another step that we are taking (that ties into today's topic) is to plan for a restructuring of our acquisitions and cataloging activities into a seamless operation. Since July 2004, administratively, the former Acquisitions Directorate and Cataloging Directorate have been one unit. The functions of these two technical services activities have, however, remained separate. What is needed is to merge the workflows into an integrated operation that will yield better use of staff; that will enable us to bring in existing metadata from a variety of external sources; that will allow the incorporation of digital materials into our general workflows; and that will permit us to move staff more nimbly to address changing workloads, changing language needs, and changing subject requirements.

To achieve these goals, we are redefining job descriptions for our professional librarian staff and for our technician support staff. In the reorganized environment of the Acquisitions & Bibliographic Access Directorate, the new job description for our librarians will incorporate acquisitions, cataloging, and selection duties. For the technicians, the new job description will support duties for both acquisitions and cataloging. The eventual goal is that technicians will have primary responsibility for descriptive cataloging. Librarians will be freed up to focus on the more professional determining duties. These duties will include authority control; subject analysis for subject heading assignment and classification—including assignment of *Dewey Decimal* numbers; and processing and addressing issues related to digital and web resources. New workflows will be instituted that reduce redundant handling of materials, so that as much as can will be done to an item the first time that it is handled and so that materials are handled by staff at the optimal job grade level. Our aim is to have completed all planning and to implement this reorganized

environment in October 2008, the beginning of fiscal year 2009.

Very much related to today's public forum topic, LC has been actively pursuing ways of obtaining bibliographic data from vendors. This pursuit on our part has brought home in dramatic ways the economic value attached to metadata. There is a cost for libraries to create bibliographic data. Similarly, there is a cost for vendors to create comparable data, particularly if we want the data to be at a level that we can use as it is when we receive it, making the books we purchase from the vendors shelf-ready. The Library's explorations with our Italian book dealer, Casalini Libri was mentioned by Bob Nardini. It was another action on our part that caused considerable flak. We came under intense scrutiny and received a barrage of complaints, correspondence, and letters to Congress when we agreed, during our first year's agreement with Casalini, not to redistribute the records that we purchased from Casalini. In order to test the efficacy of a vendor's supplying accompanying bibliographic records (and associated authority records) for the books we purchase, we felt it was worth delaying redistribution of the records until the end of the first year of the agreement. Further, our arrangement with Casalini made possible the redeployment of two full time equivalent acquisitions staff—who previously handled Italian materials—to take on other duties.

Our constituents told us, however, that our unilateral move to purchase Casalini records, and not allow immediate redistribution, was viewed as shifting costs—not reducing costs. Libraries needing those records could either wait until LC could redistribute them or create the records themselves. Either option was an extra cost to the libraries. What this underscored for us was the value attached to bibliographic data—data that the Library had freely shared with national and international constituents for well over a century. If we were to continue in this direction, it meant that we had to find—or rather work with the library and vendor communities to find—a new business

model that could both sustain the need for vendors to recoup a reasonable profit while allowing the free sharing of data, as libraries have been so accustomed to doing.

Another nuance to complicate the economic factor is that for the other customers of the records that LC purchased, their record cost for the benefit of receiving shelf-ready books (and reducing their processing costs) was as little as one fifth what LC paid. So, LC was helping offset costs for other libraries, even if only a small universe of libraries.

To help us address the issues stemming from using vendor supplied records, we convened a group of representatives from ALA's Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries Discussion Group (the so called Big Heads). Working with that group helped to surface several views. One of the questions posed to the group was what would constitute "sufficient and acceptable" cataloging. The group identified three needs that the vendor records should fulfill—indexing (the records should support user discovery); browsing (the records should support collocation); and retrieval (the records should lead the user to the content sought by the user). Most of the group agreed that these three needs could be satisfied with records at a level less than the core level standard that we had established in our agreement with Casalini. The group further agreed that their libraries could accept vendor records without the creation of authority records that LC deemed vital. These issues remain to be resolved as we move forward in our quest to establish a more expansive universe of vendor supplied bibliographic data, and still allow vendors to sustain reasonable compensation.

Beyond Casalini, LC has been engaged in several other arrangements with vendors for bibliographic data. For these and any future agreements, we will not agree to restrict redistribution

of records we receive. Expanding to non-roman scripts, we have entered into agreements with two Japanese vendors, Japan Publications Trading Company (JPTC) and Kinokuniya Company to provide, on a trial basis, core level bibliographic data. Under these two arrangements, the vendors are not to supply authority records. The vendors will notify LC when an authority record is needed; LC catalogers will create the needed authority record. During the recent Council on East Asian Libraries this past spring, LC was publicly asked to coordinate dealings with vendors in East Asia on behalf of libraries needing bibliographic data for East Asian materials. How feasible this might be remains to be seen, based on our success with the JPTC and Kinokuniya pilots. We have been in dialog with several other dealers who are ready to demonstrate that they can produce bibliographic data that meet our needs for shelf-ready materials: dealers for Portugal and Spain; France; Russia and other Slavic countries; Germany and Austria; and Argentina and other Latin American countries.

In this sketch, I have necessarily only briefly outlined some of the steps LC has initiated to meet our needs for more cataloging data, that is less expensive, but that is fully adequate to meet the needs of a user seeking information. We have done much more. I trust that I have provided a sense of the importance that we in the Acquisitions & Bibliographic Access Directorate and in Library Services attach to seeking continually to find ways for providing efficient bibliographic control in our fast changing information landscape.